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## EDUARD MÖRIKE: A NEGLECTED GERMAN CLASSIC

In the year 1838 the well-known firm of Cotta in Stuttgart published an unpretentious volume of poems, which were destined, however, to be immortal. There was nothing in them that could possibly have attracted the attention of their clamorous age. Neither social problems nor political oppression seemed to weigh upon the soul of their author. He was as unpretentious as they — no warrior, no hero, no statesman, no philosopher, merely a poet. Such a virtue is recognized by few. One of this minority was a great critic, Friedrich Theodor Vischer, who lived to be among the small company assembled in 1875 about the poet's grave to pay him their last tribute of love and esteem. He could only say that there was a small, quiet circle of readers who were refreshed and charmed by the "wonderful, bright and happy dreams" of the poet, and utter a prophecy that this circle would widen with the coming years. And Vischer's prophecy has been fulfilled, slowly but surely. Men of taste have long since agreed that Eduard Mörike was a genius. The people do him the honor of singing his songs while forgetting who wrote them; and his name, little known in America, is a rival of Heine's for the second place in the lyric poetry of Germany.

The external circumstances of Mörike's career are soon told. He was born in 1804 in Ludwigsburg, a town in Swabia. His ancestors, originally of noble stock, had experienced severe reverses of fortune, suffered immersion into the working classes, and, several generations before the poet's birth, risen from this wholesome baptism into the ease of middle life. His father was a physician in good standing, his mother of equal respectability. Her family claimed Luther among its ancestors. After the death of his father, in the boy's thirteenth year, his mother moved to Stuttgart, the capital of Württemberg. Mörike being of gentle, spiritual disposition, his mother decided he should preach; the more obviously, as his education would then be at the expense of the State. He barely made his entrance exami-

nations to the seminary at Urach, a secularized convent in the Jura Mountains, where he continued his record as an indifferent student. In spite of the severe discipline, he and his friends enjoyed their school days, especially the fine mountain scenery about them. Of these impressions his verse is reminiscent—the sunned crags, ancient cloud-seats, the heavy forests, where noon scarcely shines through, and the shadows mingle with balsamic sultriness. No lover of what he termed “examination sweat,” and sometimes careless of his deportment, he was none the less a general favorite with teachers and fellow-students; for besides being of a lovable disposition, he was a rare conversationalist and a fine mimic, who entertained with abandon when the mood struck him.

Four years in Urach (1818-22) and then four in the advanced seminary in Tübingen completed his academic preparation. The theological courses in Tübingen were behind the times. Mörike left the very year the famous F. C. Baur entered the University faculty. The years spent in the pleasant Neckar town were, however, among the happiest of his life. There he made enduring friends, with whom he read Jean Paul, Goethe, Shakespeare, and the poets of German Romanticism. With them also he invented mythological places of unique charm. Here was born that strangest of heroes, the Sure-Man, and here localized and peopled the fair island of Orplid, to which are dedicated the classic lines of Weyla's Song.

In Tübingen, likewise, the poet's heart was stirred by a love affair which, surrounded as it was by an atmosphere of mystery and romance, left a deep impress upon his literary work. On a visit to Ludwigsburg he found serving in one of the taverns a beautiful girl, whose misfortune seemed the more interesting because of her refinement and education. The tavern-keeper had discovered her unconscious on the road and taken her into his protection. Maria Meyer—such was her name—exercised a peculiar charm over men, her natural beauty acquiring an exotic tinge from the disease of epilepsy, of which she was presumably a victim. Mörike, like some of his friends, came under her spell so strongly that his final conviction of her infidelity nearly ruined his health. But he overcame the ill effects

of his experience by transmitting it into "song, the poet's second soul." Thus were composed the Peregrina poems, among the finest in the German language.

In a series of five members, of varying rhythm, the writer develops his theme. First, within the narrow compass of an eight-line stanza (*ottavarima*) he shows us Peregrina, i.e. the strange or foreign girl, in sombre beauty, with a smile extending to her lover "death in the cup of sin." We may understand these words as suggesting an apprehension of some mystery in her past. Then in a longer poem of free rhythmic movement and decided oriental coloring, the marriage feast is described. The third poem, likewise in unrhymed lines, opens with the fatal words: "Desolation entered the moonlit gardens of a once sacred love. I discovered longstanding deception. With tears, yet cruelly, I bade my slender, bewitching love depart from me. Alas! her head was bowed, for she loved me; but she went forth in silence, out into the gray world." From that moment on his heart is torn with remorse. He imagines her return to his door with true words of love and the old faith in her eyes. The fourth poem shows us how her image pursues him even in the midst of gay company, and leaves him no rest. A sonnet closes the cycle, and concentrates in its terse lines the whole force of the tragedy. He finds Peregrina again, poor, homeless, and forsaken, rejoicing in the storms of spring, with wild flowers in her hair. When he wishes to take her in his arms once more, she kisses him with mingled love and hate, and turns away from him forever into the night of insanity.

At the age of twenty-two Mörike left Tübingen, with a small number, something over a dozen, of imperishable lyrics to his credit. The next year was one of importance in his life, for it brought him bitter experience in the loss of his dearest sister, and before its close he had resolved to give up his career in the Church. Many things led to this resolution on his part. Without experience in the world, he imagined that his own work was subject to unusual hardships. Besides, he never learned to do things in order. Having to preach at stated intervals distracted him, leaving the fires of his genius to smoulder. He said the thought of Sunday stood before him like a ghost. Moreover,

skepticism was rife, and at this time more than any other Mörike doubted his own orthodoxy. Interest in great dramatic plans, and the mistaken conviction of his powers in that direction estranged him from his work. Finally, a close friend of his, having just deserted the ministry for literature, urged Mörike to follow his example. Against the will of his family the poet yielded to this advice. Prudently securing a temporary release from his curacy, he found employment as contributor to a Stuttgart publication at the fixed salary of six hundred florins a year. In a short time he discovered his present position to be worse than his former. He complained that his muse "had got consumption," and he was now more eager to reënter the curacy than he had been to desert it. "It seemed as if scales had fallen from my eyes. All those plans that so fill my heart I can pursue nowhere in the world, such as the world is, with greater security and joy than in the garret of a Würtemberg rectorate. The devil take me if I am not in earnest." With this remarkable asseveration the poet took refuge again in the bosom of the Church, where he remained henceforth with gradually subsiding pangs. He was no Prometheus.

Now followed a long period of apprenticeship, due in part to distaste for his work, in part to the intrigues of one of his brothers against the government, but chiefly to his poor health, which was not suited to every task. Not until 1834 did he receive his first vicarage, in the little village of Cleversulzbach. During these years of roving Mörike had written many of his finest poems, some of them under the inspiration of Luise Rau, a pastor's daughter. His long engagement to her was finally broken off. Besides a number of poems, however, it produced, in the form of his letters, love literature of the highest type. During these years, also, Mörike wrote his only novel, *Maler Nolten*, which was published in 1832. On the whole, therefore, this was his most productive time. We may first glance briefly at the novel and then at the poems.

Though *Maler Nolten* is named for its hero, who is an artist, it does not belong to the type of artist-novel so favored among the German Romantic poets. At one time Mörike, who more than once wished for himself the artist's career, seems to have

had such a book in mind. His novel, however, turned out quite different. It is in reality the psychological study of an abnormal young girl, Agnes, to whom Nolten is engaged. She is the daughter of a forester. A secret fear that she will not be sufficient as the intellectual companion of a talented young artist is the first indication of her problematic nature. The occasional uncertainty of her attitude to Nolten arising from this fear, is aggravated by the prophecy of a crazy girl that she is destined to marry someone else. The further problem of the story is to show how circumstances force her from this state of mind into ever greater confusion, ending with insanity. Among the chief means to this end is Nolten's love affair with a countess, after Agnes's conduct has estranged him for the time being. In fact this episode occupies so much space at the opening of the novel that the reader relinquishes it with reluctance to take up the main story. And as Agnes, during all this time, is introduced to us only indirectly, we never cease quite to regret the subordination of the countess. In the second part of the book, however, the author turns all his remarkable powers to illumining the destiny of his heroine. He solves the terrible problem inexorably. Especially the passages at the end, in which the madness of Agnes is portrayed, are done with a rare imaginative power that makes them comparable to the Ophelia and Gretchen scenes.

*Maler Nolten* is to some extent autobiographical. As a story it also has a good many of the ear-marks of Romanticism: the hero an artist, conversations about art, descriptions of pictures, interspersed songs and ballads, in the manner of *Wilhelm Meister*, and some mysteries and mystifications. But the motivation is human. Mörike's chief danger as a story-teller lay perhaps in his fondness for telescoping one story into another,—a convenient but lax method. Nearly every person tells his story, or has it told for him. What makes us forget this and every other fault the book may have, is the atmosphere of poetry that envelops it from first to last; more especially the first part as it now stands and the latter half of the second part. The novel was never really completed by its author. The version published in 1832, the only one that appeared in Mörike's lifetime, was not satisfactory to him, and, in spite of the protests of his friends,

he began a revision after he was over fifty years of age. He rewrote the first part, and left notes and marginal comments on the second. From these manuscripts one of his friends, Professor Klaiber, made a second version. Various attempts have been made to get a better text, noteworthy being that of Karl Fischer in the *de luxe* edition for the Kunstwart. Professor Maync in his edition of 1909 went back to the *Nolten* of 1832. It is unfortunate that this noble work should not have been given final form by its author, for *Maler Nolten*, from the standpoint of poetry, takes its place in the mind along with *Wilhelm Meister* and Gottfried Keller's *Green Henry*.

As has already been said, Mörike's strongest hold on immortality lies perhaps in the volume of verse he published in 1838. Like his other works this met with a modest reception, and subsequent editions were published only at long intervals. Since there are scarcely any well-marked periods in his art, these poems may safely form a basis for the study of his genius.

Mörike is in no sense a "modern" poet. There are no problematic themes in his collection. He is not philosophical, nor even intellectual, but rather a writer of delicate feeling and unusual susceptibility to sensuous beauty. "A thing of beauty seems blessed in itself." Such was the instinct of the youth, such the confession of the mature poet. His themes are simple and transparent, though treated with infinite variety. If he writes of nature, it is the approach of spring, a swim in the river, a walk through the woods, midnight, a September morning. There is no titanic yearning for comprehension of the innermost soul of nature, such as the Faust in Goethe knew, or if it is there, it is a rare and transient mood. And if he writes of love, his subjects have the simplicity of the Volkslied: love's beginning, love's joys, forsaken love. Or else he falls with unexcelled grace into the anacreontic vein, which must be graceful or nothing. The poem in which Amor sells the poet ink, thereby converting every letter into a love-letter, is conceded to be a rival of Goethe's *With a Painted Ribbon*. Mörike's success in this direction bears witness to a sure taste, a vivacious fancy, and a delicate humor.

Among the more obvious characteristics of his style is a clear, poetic vision of sensuous beauty. His writing is graphic to a

degree rare even among poets. Of the German poets none can equal him in this respect except Goethe, and perhaps Keller in his prose, while of the English poets Keats may furnish us with a fair comparison. Many of his lyrics show us a heart full of the ecstasy of living, expressing itself in joyous buoyant language. Their vocabulary is rich in words of tone and color, which lead us gently and unaware into a radiant atmosphere. This singular clarity of vision pervades the entire range of his work, whether the subject be beautiful or grotesque. Without apparent effort, with a swift and facile imagination he finds the fitting word. If he wishes to contrast the birch-tree with the oak, he can put in two lines the qualities of heavy and open foliage, of strength and grace, of resistance and motion, of man and maiden, of darkness and light. This style excludes what is fantastic, but does not restrict the imagination. It is graphic without being tedious.

A closer consideration of Mörike's nature-poems reveals several general methods of expression. Sometimes the sensuous vision above characterized extends throughout the poem, practically unmixed with emotion. That is, the lyric is as nearly objective as any expression can be after passing through the mind. The view of nature given us serves no emotion, it is an end in itself. The poet, while he is the maker of that particular scene, no longer seems entangled in what he portrays. His soul is clarified into a simple medium of beauty. Some of these unemotional poems are varied, however, by the use of personification, which is guided by an unerring taste. Noteworthy among poems of this type is *Midnight*, which is otherwise remarkable for sound, rhythm, and color. Night descends calmly on the land, and leans in meditation on the mountain-sides. Her eye sees the golden balances of time rest with equal scales. The springs rush forth, and sing to their mother, Night, their story of the day that has passed :—

The old primeval slumber-song,—  
To her it is too old, too long ;  
To her the Heaven's blue hath sweeter sound,  
The fleeting hours with even-balanced round.

[Das uralt alte Schlummerlied  
Sie achtet's nicht, sie ist es müd' ;  
Ihr klingt des Himmels Bläue süsser noch,  
Der flücht'gen Stunden gleichgeschwung'nes Joch.]



But even in their slumber the waters sing of the day that has passed (vom heute gewesenem Tage).

Mörike is, however, as fully master of the emotional values of nature as of her more indifferent moods. The extent to which he allows his individual emotion to penetrate his lines varies greatly. Now the emotion is slight and indirect, now the main object, as when it is used as a foil to love. Sometimes the symbol and the thought run side by side, touching only by implication — an old, approved method of the masters. A good example is the second strophe of the verses entitled *Advice of an Old Woman* :—

I was young too —  
I know a few things.  
And now I am old,  
Hence heed my word.

Fine ripe berries  
Hang on the branches ;  
Neighbor, there's no use  
Fencing your garden,  
Mischievous birds  
Will find out the way.

But you, my lassie,  
Let me advise you —  
You keep your sweetheart  
Full of affection,  
Full of respect.  
[Etc., etc.]

The parallelism is, however, often much more complex, so that the lines of thought and symbol wind in gradually, like the lines of a volute, about the central effect. Where mere parallelism would be too pensive to express the emotion, Mörike intensifies the inner mood by the outer situation. Such a poem is *Home-sickness*, which contains one of the finest lines in his work :—

Hier scheint die Sonne kalt ins Land.

Another example is furnished by the most popular of his shorter songs, *The Forsaken Girl*, where the stroke of art is in depicting despair at the dawn of day, when any emotion is likely to be keenest. The daring poem, in which a girl's first love is compared to an eel in the net, may have been suggested to him by his little sister, who, in attempting to express her happiness,

once said to him: "In my soul it is just as if all sorts of little fish were wiggling about there." At any rate, few poets could have made such an effort succeed as Mörike did.

Mörike's art, like that of Goethe and Heine, is marked by its affinity with the folksong. The gardener and his hidden love for the princess, the young hunter kissing the king's daughter, the song of the soldier's girl wishing her lover home from war—such are among his subjects. To a striking degree, also, he possesses the personifying, myth-making powers that are serviceable in this genre. Though he uses some of these inventions in ballads, his style in general is not energetic enough for ballads of great spirit. The charm of his ballads lies in their lyric quality, in situation and mood. Attention has been called by Professor Maync to the interesting fact that Mörike differs from Uhland, an excellent writer of ballads, in inventing his stories rather than accepting them from tradition. This shows that his strength lay in emotional shading. As far as these narrative poems illustrate his myth-making talent they are in great part grewsome or weird, in old Germanic fashion, personifying the forces of nature as malicious: the witch, as a beautiful woman, ensnaring the king's son and throwing his body into the sea; the Daughter of the Heath threatening to take vengeance on her faithless lover; Frau Donne drowning two lovers; the seven nixies destroying the prince.

In other myth-poems, however, Mörike is on more friendly terms with nature. In them he preserves the genuine spirit of the friendly fairy-tale. He loved to lie in the woods, listening to the wood-cutter's axe—familiar sound in Grimm—reading that "dearest of books" until he felt himself to be legendary. From this intimate association with nature sprang poems like the Elf-song, which, along with others of Mörike, is now often heard in our concert halls. Here should also be mentioned the grotesque Sure-Man (*Sicherer Mann*), a hero of unique qualities. A rude forest giant, born just after the flood, he has hair and beard like bristles, and all day long he does nothing but idle away his time, talking aloud to himself, or venting unreasoning hatred on the mile-posts, which he destroys with a single kick. The peasants appease him by paying goodly toll to his appetite. Aroused by

a humorous suggestion of the gods, he undertakes to compose a history of the world. For this purpose he manufactures a huge book out of the barn-doors in the village. Having completed his cosmogony he proceeds to the lower world and lectures to the spirits there, among whom he creates an enormous sensation. Only the devil makes fun of him, whereupon the Sure-Man robs him of his tail, explaining to the terrified souls that this will occur three times. Each time the tail will grow out shorter, and finally disappear. This will mean the end of evil on the earth. This humorous story, told in about three hundred dactylic hexameters, was illustrated by Moritz von Schwind, who shows the Sure-Man reading his book in the forest, the devil's tail projecting as a book-mark — to Mörike's infinite delight.

Some idea of the range of Mörike's fancy is had by making the transition from the grotesque world of the Sure-Man to the classic beauty of Orplid, the mystic island of his imagination. Orplid, presided over by the Goddess Weyla, is a land of calm serenity. From its bright strand ascend the mists moistening the cheeks of the gods, primeval waters laving those shores grow young again, and kings are its priests and guardians. It is as if Mörike had expressed in Weyla's Song his dream of a paradise unrevealed to mortal eyes. Orplid becomes his Avalon. This song, only eight lines in length, is the very height of lyric perfection. It expresses the same yearning for beauty as an end in itself as we find in *Midnight* and the elegiac lines *To an Æolian Harp*. Thanks to Hugo Wolf, whose name is intimately associated with Mörike's poetry, it has found a worthy setting in music.

Besides the general classifications above given of Mörike's verse we find many poems written to his friends, to some favorite poet or scientist, or in honor of some special occasion, such as a birthday, a party, or a wedding. Being, as one of his friends remarked, "poet all day long," he wrote hundreds of "house-verses" for his acquaintances, never intending or allowing the majority of them to find a place in his authorized edition. These domestic verses are remarkable for their cleverness and grace, and bring us personally nearer to the poet's lovable spirit. Of poems expressing more or less directly his attitude to life, we

find a very few. Here Mörike gives us a glimpse of himself: his aversion to all affectation, official self-complacency, and chill stoicism; his dislike of formal social functions, as in the amusing poem to Eberhard Lempp, begging off from such an occasion, and representing himself as tormented by the worst of furies, Agrypnia or Sleeplessness, since accepting the invitation; his humorous inhospitality to insolent critics, whose departure from his house he would like to hasten "with a gentle kick." Or again, in *Seclusion*, is revealed the tendency in his nature, deep-laid and increasing with age, to escape from the glare of the world into the solitude of his own heart. And if what a man asks for is characteristic, the *Prayer*, in nine lines, shows us a modest soul, wishing to be overwhelmed with neither joy nor pain. "Gracious contentment lies in the middle." The transitoriness of all human life finds occasional expression in his verse. The lines to Kepler pass into admiration of the stars as inaccessible to the vicissitudes of human passion, and in the sonnet *Too Much* the poet, under the same influence, takes refuge from the "rapturous conflict in his heart" to descend into the abyss of contemplation, where for him, as for Keats, "love and fame to nothingness do sink."

With the publication of *Maler Nolten* and the poems Mörike had done the larger part of his great work. He continued living at Cleversulzbach until 1843. It was a life of characteristic idleness. He laid out his own garden, spent hours in carving, drawing, taking out ink-spots, practising with the pen, telling dreams and ghost stories, and in numberless other oddities. As a simple-minded human minister, he pleased his congregation as long as his rheumatism allowed him to do his own work. Much of the time he was relieved by a curate, while Hartlaub, a neighboring pastor and friend, frequently sent over a "dozen old sermons" for use in Cleversulzbach. Occasionally, too, he preached there, while Mörike, inclined to take his ease, would lie on the grass beneath the open church window and listen.

The most important literary production originating at Cleversulzbach, apart from the collection of 1838, was a longer idyllic poem in doggerel verse, called *The Old Weathercock*. With this poem Mörike's name is now as intimately associated as that of

Burns with the *Cotter's Saturday Night*. It even resembles that poem in the homely simplicity of its theme. But while Burns writes with a certain lofty swing, Mörike prefers the tone of artless humor. Yet, for all its homeliness, the poem has that peculiar splendor never absent in this writer's works. It is the shimmer, the *Glanz*, the tone and color, which are elements of his vision of the world. Mörike based his poem on a real event. His church being under repair, the old weathercock was thrown aside, but through the pastor's sympathy found a new home, at first on the barn, then on the great stove of Dutch tiles in the study. The poet had the fruitful thought of letting the weathercock give its history, and describe the life in the rectory.

In 1843, at the early age of thirty-nine, Mörike was forced to retire on a pension. From now on he spent a roving life in search of health, though only once he went beyond the bounds of his native state. His *Idyll of the Bodensee*, a narrative poem in seven cantos, appeared in 1848. While excellent in the execution of its individual parts, it suffers from an irreparable fault in composition. In the meantime he had become engaged to Margareta von Speeth, whom he had met in Mergentheim. She was a Roman Catholic, and Mörike's friends opposed the marriage. He himself had been, unjustly, suspected of leaning toward Rome. Graver objections were found in Margareta's disposition. For Mörike the greatest obstacle lay in his slender pension, which he was compelled to reinforce by accepting an offer to lecture twice a week on German literature in a girls' institute in Stuttgart. From 1851 till 1856 he held this position, marrying in 1852.

Passing over the fine Märchen, the story of "the wizened little man," a story enveloped with the golden haze of Grimm, as well as over his occupation with Theocritus and Anacreon, we may come at once to that achievement which is conceded to be his most finished production in prose, *Mozart on the Way to Prague*. This is a novelette relating an imaginary episode in the life of the musician, who from Mörike's youth had been his ideal in the world of music. The invention by which Mozart, with his wife Constance on the way to Prague to superintend the first performance of *Don Juan*, is introduced into the castle of

Count von Schinzberg, is one of rare originality. We have first a description of the carriage in which the two are traveling, a description that envelops us at once with the atmosphere of rococo times. Then in a few pages of conversation and narration a vivid picture of the two persons in their human relations: Mozart's spontaneous enjoyment of nature, his sudden change to seriousness, bordering on melancholy, his innocence and extravagance in material things, the burden of anxiety resting on Constance, who sees her husband spend his health as lavishly in work as he does his money in pleasure, the springing up of hope in the prophecy of a brilliant future, which she half playfully invents. They stop to rest at a village inn, and while Constance retires to her room to rest, Mozart walks out to amuse himself as best he can until dinner. He strolls through an open gate belonging to the castle of Count von Schinzberg, and finding a fountain surrounded by orange trees in tubs, he takes a seat in an arbor, in front of him a little table, and just at his side a Seville orange tree full of ripe fruit. Reminded by this of a musical episode of his youth, and following out his reminiscences to the entire forgetfulness of his present surroundings, he plays with one of the oranges until it drops from the stem into his hand. He cuts it evenly through the middle, and is idly engaged in fitting the halves together again, when suddenly the gardener stands before him. The oranges on this particular tree had been counted, and their number was a significant element in the celebration about to be held by the count's family in honor of his daughter's engagement. The name Mozart means nothing to the gardener, who detains the stranger pending orders from his master. After a little prolongation of the misunderstanding, the countess realizes that fortune has played their favorite musician into their hands, and hastens to make use of her advantage. The rest of the story is an account of the festive proceedings in the castle during the day and night following. Mörike uses his old method of plentiful episodes, such as the reminiscences of Mozart's youth, the history of the orange tree, and others. But here too he overcomes the natural disadvantages of method by grace of invention and charm of style.

The picture given of Mozart sprang from long acquaintance

with the musician's works. The poet, musically receptive to a high degree, felt an inner relationship between his own spirit and the spontaneous and naïve joy in beauty manifested in those works. He purposely avoided a minute historical study of his subject. This method led him to attribute to Mozart some of his own feelings. As in all of his work, Mörike attains here complete unity of tone, or mood. Through all the spell of happiness that music and good humor cast over us, we are made to feel the melancholy of approaching gloom, we cannot escape the apprehension that the flame of this genius burns too intensely to burn long. On the morning of Mozart's departure this melancholy is deepened in the feelings of Eugenia, the count's daughter. With feminine delicacy the poet relates of her, as she stood before the piano at which Mozart had played last evening: "Long she looked thoughtfully upon the keys, which he had touched last, then she gently closed the lid, and withdrew the key in jealous fear that some other hand might open it too soon." Eugenia's melancholy mood is given a still more serious turn when, on a bit of paper that falls out of her music, she reads the words of an "old Bohemian folksong": "A little fir-tree is green somewhere in the forest, a rose bush grows in some garden, and they are already chosen to root and grow—remember this, my Soul—upon thy grave. Two black horses graze in the meadow. They return with gay movement home to the city. They will walk slowly with your body, perhaps before the iron is loosened which I see gleaming on their hoofs." (The poem entitled "Denk' es, o Seele.") With this premonition the story closes.

*Mozart on the Way to Prague* was Mörike's last great effort. The twenty years left to him saw the stream of his existence lose itself in the sands. Ever fond of seclusion, loving only the society of a few friends, to whom his conversation was priceless, he took no part in the active life of the capital. Even literary men, his admirers, hesitated to seek him out. He grew old before his time, and, owing in large measure to poor health, rapidly lost interest in life. In spite of this persistent retirement he began to receive honors and distinction, a degree from Tübingen and later the title of professor. He was also made

member of distinguished orders. All these marks of esteem he received with lovable modesty, refusing, however, to be drawn out of his seclusion. Among his friends were some of the most prominent men of his day: Friedrich Theodor Vischer, David Friedrich Strauss, Moritz von Schwind and others, while authors like Heyse and Storm acknowledged themselves as his disciples. In 1865 he was visited by Turgenieff, who had learned *The Old Weathercock* by heart. After retiring on a pension from the institute in Stuttgart, he began his roving life once more. His married life was unhappy, the misunderstandings between his wife and himself going finally so far as to cause their separation the year before his death. One of his girls remained with him, the other with the mother. Now and then he showed his old mastery in a fine poem, though he scarcely averaged one in twelve months. The account of his last years is depressing in the extreme. Disease tortured him, death took one after another of his friends, until his final release in 1875.

The appreciation of Mörike's poetry grew slowly in Germany. Heine included him, at first by name, and then, at the instance of his publisher, only by implication in his famous satire on the Swabian poets, in 1839. He also fell into the hands of unsympathetic critics, and a false and superficial view of his work was taught in the schools. But gradually men of insight were able to make his worth known, and now his place is secure among the immortals. Popularity in the widest sense, like that of Longfellow for example, he will never enjoy. Most of his work is too artistic for that. He has no phrases that fit the popular tongue, no shibboleth suitable for a party, no quotation ready for the preacher. It is significant that he never used his art as a medium to express his interest in the exciting political events of his day. He has practically no didactic vein at all. Yet even apart from these qualities, there is a sort of lyric song that takes the popular fancy. Mörike wrote some of this kind, but not enough to compete, for example, with Heine. Accepting musical settings as a test he is only sixteenth among German poets. In fact, he does not touch common humanity at many points, and it is mainly through beauty that he reaches out into everlasting things. His work has that spiritual shyness that we often



associate with poets, just as his personality showed an inward depth and gentleness that is perplexed by the competitive basis of life. Few men have been more helpless in practical affairs. Nietzsche, who loved the conquering spirit, found no entrance to the quiet gardens of this poet.

What a quaint contrast, a Swabian cassock on Mount Parnassus! And yet none belongs there more truly than he. For, if he is romantic in his themes, he is classic in his sense of form, in his moderation and restraint, in the harmony of his nature, in the clearness of outline and expression. His art has that fine and conscientious finish which we associate with writers like Poe. In the history of German lyric poetry he is now generally given the credit of having continued the sane direction of Goethe, when lyric poetry bade fair to fade away with the blue flower of Romanticism on the one hand, and to be swallowed up in the tumult of Young Germany and the Revolution on the other.

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